



Research Snippets

Offender Satisfaction with the Computerized Assessment of Substance Abuse (CASA)

KEY WORDS: *substance abuse, male offenders, client satisfaction, computerized assessment*

Impetus

The Computerized Assessment of Substance Abuse (CASA)¹ was implemented nationally in 2006². The tool is administered to male offenders upon reception into federal custody in Canada to determine the existence or severity of a substance abuse problem. Assessing the level of respondent satisfaction with the CASA is one area to be considered when identifying potential modifications to the instrument.

What we did

Using data provided by 11,707 male offenders who completed the CASA between April 1, 2006 and March 31, 2010, we examined offender satisfaction with the CASA³. Aboriginal offenders accounted for 12% of the offenders in the sample⁴.

What we found

Table 1 provides the results for CASA respondent ratings.

Table 1: National Data Exploring Offender Satisfaction with CASA

Indicators	Level of Agreement (%) ⁵		
	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1. I found the questionnaire interesting.	63	27	10
2. I learned a lot about substance abuse habits.	40	34	25
3. It was easier to be honest with the computer than with a person asking the questions.	35	32	32
4. I felt comfortable answering the questions on the computer.	69	21	10
5. I found it easy to answer the questions on the computer.	69	19	12
6. I understood the questions.	86	7	8
7. I better understood the questions when the computer read them to me. [†]	55	30	15
8. I found the questionnaire too long.	27	41	32
9. I found the questionnaire too short.	7	54	39
10. I would recommend this questionnaire to others.	58	34	8
11. I would be interested in the results of this questionnaire.	85	11	4

[†]This item is based on the 19% of offenders (N = 2,237) who indicated that they listened to the computer read the questions and response choices.
 Note: Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding error.

Overall, 63% found the questionnaire interesting. A large majority (86%) indicated that the questions were easy to understand, and found it easy (69%) to answer questions using the computer. In total, 19% indicated that they listened to the computer read the questions and response

choices to them. Among these offenders, 55% indicated that they better understood the questions. Most respondents (85%) would be interested in the results of the CASA, although 27% indicated that the CASA was too long.

The following regional trends were identified:

- Offenders in the Quebec Region were more likely to agree that the questionnaire was interesting (74%), that they learned about their substance abuse habits (47%), that they felt comfortable (75%) and that they found it easy (73%) to answer the questions on the computer. In addition, offenders in the Quebec Region were more likely to indicate that the questionnaire was too long (32%), that they would recommend the questionnaire to others (65%), and that they would be interested in the results (89%);
- Offenders in the Pacific and Prairie Regions were more likely to indicate that it was easier to be honest with the computer than with a person (38% for each);
- Offenders in the Pacific region were most likely to listen to the computer read the questions and responses (25%) but were least likely to indicate that it helped them understand the questions (48%).

Aboriginal offenders were more likely than non-Aboriginal offenders to agree with the following:

- They learned a lot about their substance abuse habits (51% versus 39%);
- It was easier to be honest with the computer than a person (45% versus 34%);
- They had the computer read the questions (29% versus 18%);
- Among those who had the computer read the questions, they better understood the questions when read by the computer (61% versus 54%);
- They found the questionnaire too long (31% versus 26%).

What it means

Based on feedback, offenders are satisfied with the CASA for assessing substance use patterns. Attempts to increase response rates and respond to offender needs, such as the use of a computer for completing the CASA and having the computer be able to read questions to respondents, were found to be effective. Potential modifications to the length of the questionnaire may further enhance offender satisfaction. This suggests that a computerized assessment is appropriate within a correctional environment.

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For more information

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¹ CASA is a computer-based intake assessment of male offenders' alcohol and other drug use.

² For additional information on the CASA, please refer to Kunic & Grant, 2006, http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/rtsch/reports/r173/r173_e.pdf.

³ The Pacific Region had a lower number of completed assessments, as a regional decision was made in September 2009 to discontinue the use of the CASA.

⁴ Aboriginal offenders are under-represented in the sample, as not all institutions in the Prairie Region had implemented the CASA at the time this report was written. Aboriginal offenders account for approximately 18% of the overall offender population.

⁵ Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree). For the purpose of this analysis, the responses were collapsed into three categories (agree, neutral, and disagree).

